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Chinese Literature.

READ BEFORE THE

China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Shanghai.

On December 14th, 1898.

BY

F. HUBERTY JAMES,

Imperial University, Peking.

SHANGHAI:
PRINTED AT THE "SHANGHAI MERCURY" OFFICE.

1899.

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"By literature we mean the written thoughts and feelings of intelligent men and women arranged in a way which will give pleasure to the readers."—S. A. Brooke.

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CHINESE LITERATURE.

"IF Chinese scholars would bring the ancient literature near to us, if they would show us something in it that really concerns us, something that is not merely old but eternally young, Chinese studies would soon take their place in public estimation by the side of Indo-European, Babylonian and Egyptian scholarship." So writes my friend, Prof. F. MAX MÜLLER, and I wish I could accept his challenge but my inability to do this affords me no excuse for not doing the little I can towards increasing the knowledge of and a consequent interest in the Literature of China.

Chinese Literature is as little appreciated in the West as the Chinese people. It should be remembered, however, that our acquaintance with either is limited; we have seen most of the least interesting specimens of both the books and the men; and this partial knowledge is inadequate as a basis for a correct judgment.

Whatever the smart "globe-trotter" and the omniscient editor may choose to say the majority of those who have given most time and attention to the subject sturdily maintain that both the Chinese and their Literature possess interest and real worth.

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The Abbé Rémusat, who was a genuine student of the Chinese language and literature, unhesitatingly declared that, in the course of his researches, he had found—what to a Frenchman must have been specially attractive—"eloquence and poetry, enriched by the beauty of a picturesque language preserving to imagination all its colours." In this judgment he is supported by nearly all who have studied Chinese sufficiently to be entitled to an opinion upon it.

In spite of the assertions of uncharitable ignorance, Chinese Literature is neither a vast library of Oriental conceit, nor a dreary wilderness of words. For invincible uselessness it cannot compare with some of the Niagara-parching pessimistic literature of Western lands; nor is it —as yet—the acknowledged victor among competitive vendors of wise saws, artificial antiquities, and tame platitudes. It is the legitimate off-spring of the Ultra-Oriental mind, the expression of the Chinese heart, the story of the home-life, school-life, and national life of half the population of Asia. It is the precious, though fragmentary, record of the hopes and fears, the doubts and convictions, the struggles and labours, the victories and defeats, the songs and laments, the dreams and visions, the feasts and fasts, the vanities and realities alternately blessing or cursing, amusing or deluding, inspiring or depressing the souls of countless millions of pilgrims on their passage through this world to the vast and wondrous future.

This consideration should constrain us to treat Chinese Literature with *respect*. I cannot hope to do justice to so extensive a subject in a few pages. Much that ought to be said will have to be left unsaid. China's dramatic compositions, the works of the Taoist sages, and many modern writers of prose and poetry, as well as the stores

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of pregnant aphorisms and stories, will have to remain unnoticed. Even with these limitations, one may fairly ask for generous consideration while attempting in such brief space to survey so wide a territory.

One of the largest and best hand-books of Chinese literature has the following classification:—

Classics, or the Sacred Books of China, Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, Histories, Biographies, Official Records, Geography, Treatises on the Constitution, Historical Critiques, Military Affairs, Legislation, Agriculture, Medicine, Astronomy, Mathematics, Essays, Elegies, Rhymes and Songs, Buddhist, Taoist, Mohammedan and Roman Catholic literature.

The literature of China is overwhelming in extent and it is a common boast of the Chinese that their books are innumerable. Thousands of expositors have striven to expound the venerated classics, and the histories. Millions of essays exist in books and manuscripts. It ought to be a comfort to Chinese students to recall the wise words of the sage MENCIUS, "It would be better to have no books than to *believe* them all," and we may add "or to have to *read* them all.

There is a famous catalogue entitled "A Catalogue of all the Books in the Four Libraries." These imperial libraries contain no less than 93,242 books. It is a consolation to learn that this collection includes "the bulk of Chinese literature, except novels, Buddhist translations and recent publications." "This Catalogue," says a competent scholar, Mr. WYLIE, "is one of the finest specimens of bibliography possessed by China or, perhaps, any other nation. It describes the imperial libraries of the present dynasty and was drawn up by Imperial command. The plan was first put into operation in 1772, and completed in 1790." Eighteen years' labour to make a

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catalogue! Has any European sovereign done as much for his people's literature as the Chinese Emperor KIA-CH'ING did for that of his subjects? We are told „Great efforts were used to procure rare works from private libraries throughout the Empire; and rewards were conferred on those who could add a certain number of volumes to the library. The whole was arranged in four divisions, Classics, History, Philosophy, and Belles-lettres, and the completed catalogue filled 200 books. The history of every work is given and also a critique, in which the excellences and defects are pointed out.

I cannot describe *all* the 93,242 books on this occasion, but it may be well to follow the orthodox Chinese arrangement and begin with the Classics.

I.—*THE BOOK OF CHANGES*, or "Transformations," is the first in rank and the most venerated of all the Chinese canonical books. As at present arranged it consists of four parts.

(*a.*) The Symbolic Trigrams ascribed to the legendary founder of the Chinese nation. B.C. 2852-2735.

(*b.*) The *exposition* of the Trigrams by WEN WANG, the Literary Prince, B.C. 1231-1135, who while imprisoned for suspected disloyalty improved his time by so expounding the Book of Changes as to make it a complete apparatus for divination.

(*c.*) Later, about B.C. 1105, his son the Duke of CHOW found himself in durance vile and like a filial son he followed his father's example and killed time by adding notes and comments to the same old book.

(*d.*) About 407 B.C., CONFUCIUS wrote Ten Dissertations upon it, which are esteemed as highly as the work of his predecessors.

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Since that time 2,200 commentaries have either illustrated its teaching to perfection, or darkened its counsels by words without knowledge.

As this book is regarded with almost universal reverence, on account of its great antiquity, illustrious authorship and supposed unfathomable wisdom, I will give a brief account of the three leading views as to its contents.

1. The Chinese have always regarded it as a compendium of the highest and deepest philosophy. In its enigmatic pages the germs of all knowledge, the laws of the origin and transmutation of all things, the material for discovering the secrets of destiny are believed to be enshrined. Thus CONFUCIUS regarded it and we are told that he toiled over it until the leathern thongs which bound his copy of it together, were *thrice* worn out. In his old age he said: "If I had fifty years more to give to the study of it, I should hope to fathom its wisdom."

2. Undeterred by the great sage's words, one of the greatest sinologues has pronounced it to be nothing more than a *handbook of divination*, and its vaunted symbolic philosophy of all things, "*a mechanical play of idle abstractions.*"

3. The latest and best supported theory of the book is that of Prof. LACOUPERIE, who regards the most ancient parts of the book as simply lists of ideographs with explanatory notes. These he thought were probably prepared by the leaders of the Chinese when they migrated from Accadia to China, some 3,000 years B. C. Thus it becomes not a book of fate or occult philosophy, but a valuable ancient fragment in which is contained much information on the ethnography, customs, language, and writing of the ancient Chinese.

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It would be an immense benefit to China if her scholars could be induced to examine and accept this view. No book has done so much to create and perpetuate pride, prejudice and superstition as this misinterpreted old Classic.

It has fostered fatalism and sustained nearly every delusion which has obstructed progress and hindered the enlightenment of the people. As the thorough investigation of WILSON in India deprived the defenders of Suttee of the sanctions claimed from the revered *Vedas*, so the researches of the despised Western barbarian may eventually undermine the foundations of Chinese superstition, and remove of the most formidable obstacles from the pathway of progress. Nevertheless the book remains a colossal monument of the capacity of the persevering but misapplied ingenuity of Chinese scholars. There is no doubt they have spent more time and labour on its misty and bewildering pages than has sufficed to give us all the inventions of this century.

To be just, however, I must quote two or three from the few really useful sentences buried amid its enigmatic puerilities: "The Sage delights in Heaven, and knows its ordinances, hence he has no anxieties." "The husband loves his helpmate at home, the wife loves him who is the pattern for the family." "The good man prospers, the mean man comes to grief."

II.—*THE BOOK OF HISTORY.* Next to the Book of Changes but far surpassing it in value comes the Book of History. Prefixed to it there is an ancient fragment entitled "The Annals of the Bamboo Books." These are said to have been found in a tomb about A. D. 279. The writing on the bamboo slips was graven with an iron style. The genuineness of these Annals is not beyond dispute, though it is quite possible that in a tomb in the dry

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climate of North China, sections of bamboo might last the 600 years or so claimed for them. Though not specially valuable as a whole, a few passages in it assist us in discovering the truth on some disputed points in Chinese History.

Even Western astronomers may be interested in the record that "In the 6th year of the reign of the Emperor KWEI, B.C. 1834, the five planets Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars and Saturn went out of their courses. In the night stars fell like rain. The earth shook and the rivers I and Loh became dry."

The same emperor is said to have "made for the first time men-drawn-carriages," which seem to have been used to convey his wife to her new residence. (They were *not* 'Ricshas). After all our denunciation of the Chinese for the degraded estate of their women, is it possible that we have to admit that the first man to give his wife a *carriage* was a Chinese?

Of the Emperor TANG, B.C. 1557, we read— "He roofed over, for the first time, the altar to the spirits of the land dedicated by the HSIA dynasty. In his 26th year there was a great drought. A prince named KIEH, of the house of HSIA died at Mount Ting, when it was forbidden to play on stringed instruments and also to sing and dance. "*He cast metal money.*" Commentators say this was done "for the sake of the poor, in order that they might have some way to redeem their children who had been sold during the famine caused by the drought."

"In his 24th year, the drought still continuing, the king prayed in the mulberry grove and it rained."

Then we have notes of the Emperor TAI KIA performing a great service to ancestors, a sacrifice to the spirits of the four quarters, and returning thanks for a very abundant harvest, B.C. 1428. Later, about B.C.

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1318 we are told that "Emperor Wu Ting inspected the schools where they nourished the aged." Prof. Legge says "These schools were asylums. They were called schools because the aged who were supported in them would enforce the duties of filial piety and submission."

So the chronicle of the Bamboo Books runs on; expeditions, battles, presentations of tribute, building of beacon towers, earthquakes, appearance of two suns, storms, comets, etc. But we must leave it and turn at once to the Book of History itself. Its historical memorials probably extend over a space of about 1,700 years, from B.C. 2350 to B.C. 630.

A *charitable* theologian gravely assures us that "for a *pagan* work, the morality of the Book of History is extremely good." In the estimation of the Chinese the seeds of almost everything valuable are contained in its pages. It furnished the foundation of their political and social system, their history, religious rites, military tactics, astronomy and music. I can give only a few brief extracts which are certainly very remarkable passages when we consider the age in which they were produced.

"The Cautions of the Great Statesman Yu," are written in a sort of blank verse.

"It was the lesson of our great Ancestor,
The people should be cherished;
They should not be down-trodden;
The people are the root of a country,
The root firm—the country is tranquil.

Should dissatisfaction be waited for until it appears?
Before it is seen it should be guarded against.
In my relation to the millions of the people
I should feel as much anxiety,
As if I were driving six horses with rotten reins.

When the palace is a place of lust,
And the country a wild waste for hunting,
When wine is sweet and music a delight;
When there are lofty roofs and carved walls,
These things have ever been the prelude to ruin."

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"For a pagan work" this is certainly very good.

An officer must have had rather heavy resposibilities in those days, for the worthy I-YIN, one of the ministers of the Emperor CH'ENG T'ANG—B.C. 1766—lays it down very emphatically that "The minister who does not try to correct the vices of the sovereign shall be punished with branding."

The use and abuse of spirits (liquid, of course) were understood in China 3,000 years ago, for King WEN taught that spirits should be used only in connection with the sacrificial rites, and that "the ruin of states may be invariably traced to their crime in the use of spirits."

Of the founder of one of the early dynasties, the Duke of SHAO said:—"Heaven guided his mind, and allowed his descendants to succeed him, and protect them. He made himself acquainted with Heaven and was obedient. But in process of time the decree in his favour fell to the ground"—and then calamity followed.

Another sovereign is mentioned in the chronicle as "luxurious, dark, slothful and dissolute; he would not for a single day yield to the *leading of God*." Then Heaven changed its decree and raised up a better man to rule the people.

The commentators dwell much on the words, "leading of God," and interpret them as signifying "the constant monitions of conscience, by which God endeavours to keep men in the right path."

III.—*The BOOK of POETRY* is a collection of the ancient odes and ballads of the Chinese. It is arranged in no exact chronological order. The earliest pieces belong to about 1719 B.C., and the latest to 585 B.C., only about thirty years before the birth of CONFUCIUS.

Here is a fragment—very old—but probably not too antiquated to be understood even to-day.

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"AN APPOINTMENT."

(ALLEN'S *Shï-King*, p. 31.)

"Some may love, not fearing shame,
But my lot is scarce the same,
I must go where stars are brightly
Twinkling in the Eastern sky,
Tripping swiftly, treading lightly,
To escape each envious eye.
Save the Pleiades above
And Orion throned on high
None may see or know our love.
- - - - - - - - - - -
For my love must rest concealed.
To no mortal eye revealed."

This simple song sorely tried the good prosy expositors, who were under a solemn obligation to worry a moral into it, and then out of it, for the admonition of the young and gentle reader.

One poem expresses the emotions of a brave warrior who had been taken prisoner and compelled, like SAMSON of old, to dance and make sport before his captors. (ALLEN'S *Shï-King*. p. 53)

1

"They set me to dance with an easy grace
At noon in the palace court.
I brandish a feather before my face,
Or else with a fan I sport.

2

Though my thews are so strong that the wildest steed
When I hold his reins must stand,
I must dance, and when flushed in the dance my meed
Is a draught from the duke's own hand.

3

The hill-grown hazels I long to see,
And the flowers, which the streamlets lave,
In the West, where a warrior bold like me
Is a warrior—not a *slave*."

We will take two stanzas which sadly tell the old story of

"BROKEN TIES."

(ALLEN, p. 107.)

"Remember how we used to stray,
When first our mutual love was new.
Hand clasped in hand we trod the way,
So fond and true.

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2

Now bitter words alone are spoken,
You only scorn me and deride,
Old love is lost, old ties are broken
And cast aside."

Next we must find room for a patriotic lament over the ambitions and intrigues of rival princes which had caused the desolation of his country. (ALLEN, p. 249)

It is entitled:—

"A LONGING FOR REST."

1

Though the river is swollen in flood, and fast must its waters flee,
And huge are the angry waves, which it bears on its troubled breast;
Yet it carries them safely down to the court of the god of the sea,
And there finds rest.

2

Though the falcon is forced to ascend to the sky in her rapid flight,
And to soar that she may provide some food for the young in her nest;
When her wings are weary she knows a crag whereon to alight,
And there finds rest.

3

Would that I, like the river or falcon, might win some place of repose
For to and fro am I driven with sorrow and grief opprest.
When I think of these lawless men, I am crushed with a weight of woes,
But find no rest.

4

Oh my countrymen, brethren, friends! are your parents nothing to you
That ye suffer our realm to be by malice and spite distrest?
Keep vigilant watch, and see that slanderous tongues be few,
And give us rest."

A different note is struck in the jolly farmer's

"SONG OF THE HARVEST." (ALLEN, p. 315, 5th stanza.)

"As the thatch on the roof, or a tilt on a cart;
So my harvest covers the lea;
My stacks of corn from the corn-fields rise,
As islands rise from the sea.
Oh, where shall I find the barns and the carts
For the millet, the rice and the maize?
My men rejoice and invoke for me
Great blessings and endless days."

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Two stanzas from the "Ode on the Ancestral Temple of Duke Hsi," must conclude our review of Ancient Chinese Poetry. (ALLEN, p. 497. v. 10 & 19)

10.

"The Powers will make you prosperous.
Long lived and good and great,
To guard the eastern region
To rule for years this State,
Unvexed, unmoved, unfallen.
Though length of life extend
To the ages of the mountains,
These Powers shall be your friend.

19.

So now the high pine rafters
Roof in each shrine and hall,
Which brilliant and resplendent
Rise vast and wide and tall.
It was HSI SZ, who built it
Magnificent and grand,
To be the people's wonder.
The glory of our land."

Here is a fine verse:

"A WIFE'S COMMENDATION OF HER BANISHED HUSBAND."

"But ye know, ye princes who rule the state,
There is never a man so pure as he,
With a soul so clear of all malice and hate,
From greedy desire of gold so free."

IV.—*Fourth* on the list of the Classics is the *BOOK OF RITES*, which consists mainly of elaborate instructions on the duties of rulers, statesmen and officials, with minute rules for the proper performance of religious rites and state ceremonials. "More than any other work, it has shaped the *external* form of Chinese civilization, preserving its essental unity under all vicissitudes, prescribing alike official forms and private manners."—(MARTIN.) No book so well illustrates the respect of the Chinese for statutes and commandments. They may cramp the mind, destroy liberty, but this matters little if only "*propriety*" be

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maintained inviolate. Therefore, he who desires to understand China and the Chinese, must read the "Book of Rites,"—not *rights*.

V.—Last on the list of the five oldest Classics, is the *SPRING AND AUTUMN RECORDS*. This work is the only one ascribed wholly to CONFUCIUS. The evidence however is, I think, strongly against this view, and one is not sorry to be obliged to believe it is the work of several authors. It contains a history of Lu, the native state of CONFUCIUS, from B.C. 484, and is accompanied by the inevitable ponderous commentaries in which the Chinese student delights. In this case, they are valuable for their elucidation of history, and also models of first-class composition. It must be admitted, however, that some of its court stories appear as if they were written by a scribe whose sense of propriety was—to put it mildly—not fully developed.

After the five older Classics we come to the *FOUR BOOKS*.

I.—Of these the first is the "Great Study" which contains one chapter by CONFUCIUS, and ten by his disciple TSENG TS'AN. This little book—(for it is one of the smallest of the Classics)—deals with four great subjects, and begins with the greatest of all—the *improvement of one's self*. Something less difficult comes next—the regulation of a family; then, still less difficult—the government of a state. Last, easiest and happiest of all,—the rule of an empire. It is a typical Confucian book, wise, practical, simple. One can only regret that with such a concise guide to virtue and peace, the empire, the family and the individual, have not yet attained the ideal state. A sage says:—"Human nature takes a lot of hammering to get it into shape." *It does*.

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2.—The second of the "Four Books" is "The Doctrine of the Golden Mean," by Tsz Sz, the grandson of CONFUCIUS. It deals with the ruling motives of human conduct, and eulogises the princely or ideal man who avoids all extremes and keeps steadfastly to the ancient pathway of immaculate propriety. In terse, forceful sentences it inculcates sincerity, diligent study, self-control, and though the ideal man is said to exemplify all these virtues, he does so, not by the power of superior natural endowments, but by incessant self-culture and watchfulness—for "the ideal man is watchful over himself when he is alone." Very few of the "Sacred Books of the East" contain so much wisdom in so small a space. It is a pity that its presentation of Confucian ethics is of that pretentious, pedantic type which to Western people is so distasteful.

3.—*THE CONFUCIAN ANALECTS*, or "Conversations of CONFUCIUS with his Disciples," occupies the third place in order of the Four Books, and the first in the estimation of the Chinese. It is one of China's best books. Here in a fraction of the space is more practical instruction than can be discovered in the whole of the *Koran*, or the *Zend Avesta*, and many of the Indian scriptures. Says CONFUCIUS, "Five things constitute perfect virtue. Gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness and kindness." "Let the will be set on the path of duty." "The object of the ideal man is truth, he is anxious lest he should not obtain it, he is not anxious lest poverty should come upon him." "Righteousness he holds to be of the highest importance." "He stands in awe of Heaven." "He will not seek to live at the cost of injuring his virtue."

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4.—Last on the Classic list are the *WORKS OF MENCIUS.* He was a far more *independent* man than CONFUCIUS. Fond of discussion, he had fought many battles and won many victories. He maintained with considerable originality and force of argument the doctrine of the goodness of human nature, and boldly insisted on the rights of the people against useless and selfish rulers —even to the princes themselves—whose favour might have crowned his life with that kind of success and prosperity most men crave so intensely. His conception of duty was worthy of a sage. It is,—"To live in the world maintaining a true attitude and walking in the wide path of a man; in success, to share one's principles with the people; in failure, to live them out alone. To be incorruptible by riches and honours, unchangeable by poverty, unmoved by perils or power." "Strive to do your best—the end is with Heaven."

In Si-an-fu, one of the old capitals of China, there is a grand set of stone tablets, on which *the text of all the Classics was engraved* in the reign of the Emperor WEN of the T'ANG dynasty. The work was begun in *833 A. D. and completed in 837.* The tablets are still well preserved and men take fac-similes of the inscriptions and sell them. Truly this "Palace of Tablets," is one of the wonders of the world.

It is at least a powerful illustration of the great respect the Chinese have for their best literature and of the labour and expense they are willing to bestow on its preservation for the instruction of posterity. It is a weighty testimony to two of the strongest points in their character, their respect for literature and their reverence for high moral teaching.

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We must pass on next to consider the *HISTORICAL BOOKS* of China.

"The history of so great a nation during 4,000 years must possess instructive value, but the enormous mass of dry material is enough to appall any student." "The 24 dynastic histories foot up the tremendous total of 1,633 vols. The history of the last short reign of only 13 years is spread over 150 vols.!" No one imagines that history is absolutely reliable anywhere, but a good authority, Dr. MARTIN, of Peking, says:—"The writers of China are neither more nor less truthful than the Romans; and now and then we meet among them an instance of fidelity worthy of Rome's best day.....In the 6th century B.C., there lived in Shantung a general Ts'UI, who HEROD-like took possession of the wife of another, but in turn his sovereign deprived him of the fascinating beauty. The general in revenge killed the prince and usurped his throne. When the Court Chronicler put on record this chapter of infamies, he was put to death and the leaf torn from the archives of the State. A brother of the historian renewed the record; he too suffered death, and a leaf was again torn out. A third brother presented himself pen in hand to repeat the tale and seal it with his blood. The tyrant, touched by his martyr-like boldness, spared his life and submitted to the stigma. The incident is handed down as a proof of the unflinching fidelity of ancient historians and by consequence of the trustworthiness of their narratives."

On the reliability of Chinese history it may also be worth while to cite the statement of CONFUCIUS—that when he was young a chronicler would leave a blank when he came to a matter of which he was in doubt, preferring *incompleteness* to *inaccuracy*.

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It is impossible for a history comprising 1,633 vols. to be interesting throughout, still we shall be safe in claiming that with all its dullness it contains some really inspiring and even brilliant pages. They tell us the story of illustrious sovereigns, virtuous sages, heroic soldiers, famous statesmen, brilliant writers and poets, devoted students, philanthropists and famous women, some of them women of great talent and patriots of renown. And the Chinese read of them in their histories and biographies, weave them into their novels, and praise them in their poetry and ballads. As the English boy is proud of WELLINGTON, NELSON and HAVELOCK; and the American of WASHINGTON, LINCOLN and FARRAGUT, so the Chinese boys are stirred to enthusiasm over the brave and virtuous deeds, the endurance and loyalty, of the warriors and worthies of their race.

The story of the Mongol conquest of China in 1270 A.D., contains many instances of the most heroic valour, and a modern writer affirms the conduct of two Chinese generals at the Siege of Siang-yang-fu might be placed on a par with Sir RICHARD GRENVILLE's defence of the "Revenge." The Chinese resisted with extraordinary powers of endurance the whole force of the greatest conquering race Asia had ever seen. Long after most races would have given up the contest as hopeless, they held out with desperate courage and obstinately resisted to the last.

About 1380 A.D., a Chinese general was defeated and taken prisoner by the Mongols, and the city he had tried to defend was besieged by them. The Mongols thought to terrify the garrison by parading this brave general YÜ KWANG before the city walls, but he baffled their purpose by shouting out to his people,—"Be of good courage SU-TA (a loyal general) is coming to your rescue,"

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For this he was cut to pieces, but his courageous exclamation saved his countrymen and the city, for SU-TA soon arrived and drove the Mongols away. Such incidents prove that when they are devoted to their sovereign and the Government the Chinese can show as much courage and patriotism as any race in the world.

DICTIONARIES and ENCYCLOPÆDIAS form a very important department of Chinese Literature. The earliest work of this kind is called "*Er Ya*"—"The Literary Expositor," which is said to have been compiled about 400 B.C. by TSZ HSIA, one of the disciples of CONFUCIUS, but part of it is older and is thought by some critics to have been composed by the Duke of CHOW—1100 B.C.

It is a small illustrated dictionary of terms used in Classical and other literature, and is very useful as an expositor of ancient words and phrases. It is divided into nineteen sections, which it may be interesting to remark—are arranged in very much the same order as an ancient Egyptian dictionary described by the French savant CHAMPOLLION.

In course of time, the need for such works of reference gradually increased, and at the beginning of the fifteenth century the Emperor CHENG TSU appointed a commission of 148 scholars to compile an *(all-comprehensive)* cyclopædia. This work however failed to meet the Emperor's expectations, and he appointed a much larger Committee—numbering in all 2,094 literary men. The result of their labours which came to an end in 1,407, was a work containing 22,877 volumes—which in size if in nothing else ought to have satisfied even an emperor. A part of this gigantic encyclopædia perished by fire, but was afterwards restored, and at the beginning of the last century a supplement of 1,000 books containing beautiful illustrations was added to bring the "all-comprehensive" work up to date.

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BELLES LETTRES.

We must now give some attention to China's polite literature. In this department we shall find some compositions of rare worth and beauty.

HAN WEN KUNG's *essays*, written *1000* years ago, are among the most brilliant the world could boast of at that period. A poet, essayist, statesman, and philosopher of the highest order, his writings have been the delight and pride of Chinese students these 1000 years, and are as much admired to-day as ever. I will give a few extracts. "The perfect men of old were unsparing in censure of their own faults, but gentle in dealing with the shortcomings of others." Thus they kept up the standard of their own conduct and stimulated others to the practice of virtue. He who would imitate them, should say to himself—"These were but *men* after all—why cannot I do as they did?" There is his famous lament on the death of a much loved friend—"Last year I wrote thee saying of myself, 'Not forty yet; sight dim, hair grey, strength sapped. Father and brothers, lusty men all, died in their prime;—can then this decaying frame last long? I may not go, thou will not come. (Probably this refers to proposed visits). Alas! I fear

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lest at any moment I may be cut off and leave thee to unutterable grief.' Yet who would have thought that the young man was to perish and the old one to live? Is it reality or a dream? Was it truth they told me? Reality—that the line of my noble-hearted brother should be thus ended in premature death? Reality—that thy pure intelligence should not survive to continue the traditions of thy house? Reality—that the young and strong thus early fade and die, while the old and decaying live on and thrive? Reality indeed it is, and no dream, no lie. Else, why this letter, this notice of death now lying before me? Unfathomable are the appointments of what men call Heaven; inscrutable are the workings of the Unseen, unknowable are the mysteries of eternal truth, unrecognisable those that are destined to attain to old age!..... Henceforth my grey hairs will grow white, my strength fail. Physically and mentally hurrying on to decay, how long before I shall follow thee? *If there is knowledge after death, this separation will be but for a little while; if there is no knowledge after death so will this sorrow be but for a little while, and then no more sorrow forever.....* Alas! though words fail, love endureth. Dost thou hear or dost thou not hear? Woe is me! Heaven bless thee."—[GILES].

Another of the brilliant writers of China was P'U SUNG-LING, of Shan-tung, who has been called "The last of the Immortals." He was a student and took the first or B.A. degree. Then—like many an original genius—he failed to win the favour of the official examiners and retired—disappointed if not disgusted—into private life.

The door-posts of a Chinese study were once adorned with the mottoes:—

"Let books be your friends in the night's silent hours,
In the depth of the spring let your pen blossom flowers."

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and judging from the wealth of classic allusions in his writings, P'u Sung-ling must have read day and night incessantly. Very few Chinese books have beguiled so many of the weary hours of her scholars as Mr. Pu's "Strange Stories." This was his chief work. It was published in 1679 and—probably because it excoriated certain consciences in Pekin—it was placed in the "Index Expurgatorius." As human nature is constructed to enjoy what is forbidden Mr. Pu's "Stories" were demanded and enjoyed all the more. Probably no book in all the range of Chinese Literature is such a favourite with educated men. Here is the record of his musings over his book when he had finished his task. I quote from Giles' fine translation:—

"'Clad in wisteria, girded with ivy'; thus sang Sang-lu in his 'Dissipation of Grief.' Of ox-headed devils and serpent gods, 'he of the long-nails' never wearied to tell. Each interprets in his own way the music of heaven; and whether it be discord or not, depends upon antecedent causes. As for me, I cannot with my poor 'autumn fire-fly's light,' match myself against the hobgoblins of the age. I am but the sunbeam, a fit laughing-stock for devils. For my talents are not those of Yü Pao, elegant explorer of the gods; I am rather animated by the spirit of Su Tung-P'o, who loved to hear men speak of the supernatural. I get people to commit what they tell me to writing, and subsequently I dress it up in the form of a story; and thus, in the lapse of time my friends from all quarters have supplied me with quantities of material, which, from my habit of collecting, has grown into a vast pile.

"Human beings, I would point out, are not beyond the pale of fixed laws, and yet there are more remarkable phenomena in their midst than in the 'country of those who crop their hair'; antiquity is unrolled before us, and many tales are to be found therein stranger than that of the

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nation of 'Flying Heads.' 'Irrepressible bursts,' and 'luxurious ease,'—such was always his enthusiastic strain. 'For ever indulging in liberal thought,'—thus he spoke openly without restraint. Were men like these to open my book, I should be a laughing-stock to them indeed, At the cross-roads men will not listen to me, and yet I have some knowledge of the 'three states of existence' spoken of beneath the cliff; neither should the words I utter be set aside because of him that utters them. When the bow was hung at my father's door, he dreamed that a sickly-looking Buddhist priest, but half-covered by his stole, entered the chamber, On one of his breasts was a round piece of plaster like a cash; and my father, waking from sleep, found that I, just born, had a similar black patch on my body. As a child, I was thin and constantly ailing, and unable to hold my own in the battle of life. Our home was chill and desolate as a monastery; and working there for my livelihood with my pen, I was as poor as a priest with his alms-bowl. Often and often I put my hand to my head and exclaimed "Surely *'he who sat with his face to the wall'* * was myself in a previous existence; and thus I referred my non-success in this life to the influence of a destiny surviving from the last. I have been tossed hither and thither in the direction of the ruling wind, like a flower falling in filthy places; but the 'six paths of transmigration' are inscrutable indeed, and I have no right to complain. As it is, midnight finds me with an expiring lamp, while the wind whistles mournfully without; and over my cheerless table I piece together my tales, vainly hoping to produce a sequel to the 'Infernal Regions.' With a bumper I stimulate my pen, yet I only succeed thereby in 'venting my excited feelings,' and as I thus commit my thoughts to writing, truly I am an object worthy of

* See notes at the end of the lecture.

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commiseration. Alas! I am but the 'bird that, dreading the winter frost, finds no shelter in the tree;' the 'autumn insect that chirps to the moon, and hugs the door for warmth.' For where are they who know me? They are 'in the bosky grove and at the frontier pass'—'wrapped in an impenetrable gloom'!"

Prof. Giles says:—"From the above the reader will gain some insight into the abstruse, but at the same time, marvellously beautiful style of this gifted writer. The whole essay is among the most perfect of its kind. It is intended chiefly as a satire upon the scholarship of the age; scholarship which had turned the author back to the disappointment of a private life, himself conscious all the time of the inward fire that had been lent him by heaven." As to its style he says:—"Terseness is pushed to its extreme limits; each particle that can be safely dispensed with is scrupulously eliminated; and every here and there some new and original combination invests perhaps a single word with a force it could never have possessed except under the hands of a perfect master of his art. Add to the above, copious allusions and adaptations from a course of reading which would seem to be co-extensive with the whole range of Chinese Literature, a wealth of metaphor and an artistic use of figures to which only the masterpieces of Carlyle form an adequate parallel; and the result is a work, which for purity and style, is now universally accepted in China as the best and most perfect model. Sometimes the story runs along plainly and smoothly enough, but the next moment we may be plunged into pages of abstruse text, the meaning of which is so involved in quotations from and allusions to the poetry or history of the past three thousand years as to be recoverable only after diligent perusal of the commentary and much searching in other works of reference."

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The word "commentary" here recalls the fact that in China every standard work of whatever description, history, philosophy or fiction,—even the "Boy's First Book" or "Tri-metrical Classic", is furnished with a commentary. The extract I have just read is so packed with obscure allusions that no less than thirty-two *notes* are required to make the meaning clear to an ordinary reader.

Not less beautiful is an essay written by the famous statesman and patriot WEN T'IEN-HSIANG, who, when held captive by KUBLAI KHAN after the complete overthrow of the SUNG dynasty, A.D. 1280, calmly faced death rather than own allegiance to the Mongol conqueror. (It might have been entitled—"Musings of a Captive Warrior.") He writes—"Were there not the fearless and truthful annalists of old? Was there not the disinterested chivalry of CHANG LIANG? the unswerving devotion of SU WU? the guileless honesty of KWAN MING,—the martial genius of KUNG MING—the admiration of gods and men? This grand and glorious *spirit* endureth for all generations, and linked with the sun and moon, knows neither beginning nor end. The foundation of all that is great and good in heaven and earth, it (*i.e.* this spirit of love for truth and heroism) is itself born from the everlasting obligations which are due by man to man."

"Alas! the fates were against me: I was without resource. Bound with fetters, hurried away towards the north, death would have been sweet indeed: but that boon was refused."

"My dungeon is lighted by the will-o'the-wisp alone: no breath of spring cheers the murky solitude in which I dwell. Exposed to mist and dew, I had many times thought to die; and yet through the seasons of two revolving years, disease hovered round me in vain. The dank unhealthy soil to me became Paradise itself. For

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there was that within me which misfortune could not steal away. And so I remained firm, gazing at the white clouds floating over my head and bearing in my heart a sorrow boundless as the sky."

"The sun of those dead heroes has long since set; but their record is before me still. And, while the wind whistles under the eaves, I open my books and read; and lo! in their presence my heart glows with a borrowed fire."

The love of peace and horror of war so characteristic of the Chinese, are vividly depicted in Li Hwa's essay "On an old Battlefield," which was written in the ninth century A.D.

"Vast, vast,—a limitless extent of flat sand, without a human being in sight; girdled by a stream and dotted with hills; where in the dismal twilight the wind moans at the setting sun. Shrubs gone; grass withered; all chill as the hoar-frost of early morn. The birds of the air fly past; the beasts of the field shun the spot; for it is, as I was informed by the keeper, the site of an old battlefield. 'Many a time and oft,' said he, 'has an army been overthrown on this spot; and the voices of the dead may frequently be heard weeping and wailing in the darkness of the night.'.....Many were the weary leagues they trod, many were the years of privation and exposure they endured. Grazing their horses by day, fording the river by night, the endless earth beneath, the boundless sky above, they knew not the day of their return; their bodies all the time exposed to the pitiless steel, with many other unspeakable woes....."

"Alas! methinks I see them now, the bitter wind enveloping them in dust, the Tartar warriors in ambuscade. Our general makes light of the foe. He would give battle upon the very threshold of his camp. Banners

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wave over the plain; the river closes in the battle array. All is order, though hearts may beat. Discipline is everything; life is of no account."

"And now the cruel spear does its work, the startled sand blinds the combatants locked fast in the death-struggle; while hill and vale and stream groan beneath the flash and crash of arms. By-and-by, the chill cold shades of night fall upon them, knee-deep in snow, beards stiff with ice. The hardy vulture seeks its nest: the strength of the war-horse is broken. Clothes are of no avail; hands frost-bitten, flesh cracked. Even nature lends her aid to the Tartars, contributing a deadly blast, the better to complete the work of slaughter begun. Wagons block the way; our men succumb to flank attacks. Their officers have surrendered: their general is dead. The river is choked with corpses to its topmost banks; the fosses of the Great Wall are swimming over with blood. All distinctions are obliterated in that heap of rotting bones....."

"Faintly and more faintly beats the drum. Strength exhausted, arrows spent, bow-strings snapped, swords shattered, the two armies fall upon one another in the supreme struggle for life or death. To yield is to become the barbarian's slave: to fight is to mingle our bones with the desert sand....."

"No sound of bird now breaks from the hushed hill-side. All is still, save the wind whistling through the long night. Ghosts of the dead wander hither and thither in the gloom; spirits from the nether world collect under the dark clouds. The sun rises and shines coldly over the trampled grass, while the fading moon still twinkles upon the frost-flakes scattered around. What sight more horrible than this!"

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"The Hans (Chinese) beat down the Huns (Tartars) and seized YIN-SHAN. But their corpses lay pillowed over the plain and the gain was not equal to the loss."

"O high Heaven! which of these but has father and mother, who bore them about in childhood, fearing only lest maturity should never come? Which of these but has brothers, dear to them as themselves? Which of these but has a wife, bound by the closest ties?..... They may be alive or dead—the family knows it not. And if one brings the news, they listen, half-doubting, half-believing, while the heart overflows with grief. Sleeping and waking, they seem to see the lost one's form. Sacrifices are made and libations poured, with tearful eyes strained towards the far horizon; heaven and earth, nay, the very trees and plants, all seeming to sympathise with their sorrow. And when, in response to prayers and libations, these wanderers return not, where shall their spirits find repose?.....Alas! such is life, and such has it ever been."

I will give only one more passage. It was written about 400 A.D., by TAO YUAN-MING, who sacrificed a good position, because, as he expressed it, his salary was insufficient to repay him for being obliged to "crook the pregnant hinges of the knee." It is in marked contrast to the sad tone of the last extract on the battlefield, for it is on a happier subject—"*Home Again!*"

"Homewards I bend my steps. My fields, my gardens, are choked with weeds; why should I not go? My soul has led a bondsman's life: why should I remain to pine? I will waste no grief upon the past: I will devote my energies to the future. I have not wandered far astray, and I feel that I am on the right track once again."

"Lightly, lightly, speeds my boat along, my garments fluttering to the genial breeze. I inquire my route as I

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go. I grudge the slowness of the dawning day. From after I descry my old home, and joyfully press onwards in my haste. The servants rush forth to meet me; my children cluster at the gate. The place is a wilderness; but there is the old pine-tree and my chrysanthemums. I take the little ones by the hand, and pass in. Wine is brought in full bottles, and I pour out in brimming cups. I gaze out at my favourite branches. I loll against the window in my new-found freedom. I look at the swee children on my knee.

And now I take my pleasure in my garden. There is a gate, but it is rarely opened. I lean on my staff as I wander about or sit down to rest. I raise my head and contemplate the lovely scene. Clouds rise, unwilling, from the bottom of the hills: the weary bird seeks its nest again. Shadows vanish, but still I linger round my lovely pine. . . . .

Home once more! I'll have no friendships to distract me hence. The times are out of joint for me; and what have I to seek from men? In the pure enjoyment of the family circle I will pass my days, cheering my idle hours with lute and book. My husbandmen will tell me when spring-time is nigh, and when there will be work in the furrowed fields. Thither I shall repair by cart or by boat, through the deep gorge, over the dizzy cliff, trees bursting merrily into leaf, the streamlet swelling from its tiny source. Glad is this renewal of life in due season: but for me, I rejoice that my journey is over. Ah, how short a time it is that we are here! Why then not set our hearts to rest, ceasing to trouble whether we remain or go? What boots it to wear out the soul with anxious thoughts? I want not wealth: I want not power: heaven is beyond my hopes. Then let me stroll through the bright hours as they pass, in my garden among my

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flowers; or I will mount the hill and sing my song, or weave my verse beside the limped brook. Thus will I work out my allotted span, content with the appointment of Fate, my spirit free from care."

I must quote a few striking phrases from other authors. "He who adds to the pleasures of others, himself enjoys happiness." In an essay against luxury we find—"Do not fill your house so full of gold but what there is room to sit down." "To die without regret at the call of duty,—this is the aim of heroism." "A man who is not commonplace is under ordinary circumstances much like other people, but he who in moments of great trial does not flinch, *he* is not commonplace."

There are rare beauties in *Li Wen Shu*, on "Punishments," in *Shu Kwang* on "Wealth," in YANG-HSIN'S "Autumn Dirge," in LIU TSUNG YUEN'S "Congratulations on a Fire," and many others, but we must briefly notice.

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CHINESE FICTION.

Romances and novels are not admitted by the Chinese to a place in the national literature. Perhaps this very ban has increased the taste for such books, at any rate there is an abundance of them and they are devoured with as much zest as in other lands. The Imperial Library is supposed to contain only standard works, and yet in its Catalogue there are the titles of *fourteen* novels. Of course it is just *possible* that there are a few copies lying about outside the library, but if not, fourteen books are not so meagre an allowance if we remember that the average number of chapters in each book is *seventy-seven*.

Even emperors and princes may differ in their taste as to works of fiction as well as in some other things, for while one sovereign of the present dynasty prohibited a novel called "The Golden Vase," because he thought it unfit to strengthen the virtue of his subjects, his noble brother made an elegant translation of it into the Manchu language for the edification of his own kindred.

"The Golden Vase" is an artistic performance of the highest order, the beauty of its style, combined with its racy stories of the dissolute manners of the people under the Ming dynasty, have given it great popularity.

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Chinese fiction may not have quite enough dash and sparkle for our depraved Western taste, and the inevitable moral may appear to be an unnecessary disturber of our complacent self-admiration; but our gratitude ought to be unbounded when we are assured that China's millions delight in *something* beside sober *fact*, even if it be rather sober fiction. There is hope—great hope for any man or woman who can find delight in *written* fiction; for there is, at least, a bare chance that the *imagination* may be satisfied in this way without goading the tongue into sins of gratuitous equivocation.

After all deductions are made, we must admit that China's lighter literature is not deficient in interest. Its pages show that the Chinese are not in their tastes so very different from the rest of the world, and that the same elements of human life and character appeal to men in the East as in the West. Adventures of brigands, marvellous escapes, heroic exploits, court intrigues and scandals, treacheries and murders, find a place in their stories as in ours. Nor is the one supreme theme of fiction wanting to bring them into line with us. In Chinese, as in Western novels, may be found more or less life-like delineations of the everlastingly uneven course of affection so little understood by grave and prudent bunglers, whose efforts so often spoil bliss by tying up young people, according to antique but idiotic precedent, in perfectly proper but utterly inharmonious bundles.

The Chinese novelist has not toiled and spun in vain. In the "Orphan of Chow" he impresses on his people the stern but wholesome lesson that men *must* reap what they sow. In the "Sorrows of Han," and "A Son in Old Age" and "Circle of Chalk," the virtues of woman are so portrayed as to lend emphasis to a vigorous protest against her degradation, and against the superstitious view of

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ancestral rites which encourages polygamy. Popular delusions and foolish fables are keenly satirized in "The Transmigration of Yo-Chow," while in the "Love-sick One" the author ridicules the common belief that several souls can dwell in the same body. One writer lashes avaricious mandarins, juggling priests and the proud and pedantic scholar; while another enforces the much-needed lesson that *ceremonies* cannot eradicate the stains of the past, or guarantee a virtuous future. Some are veritable "novels with a purpose," and a kind purpose, too, for the writer's aim is to dispel care and to administer the merriment which "doeth good like a medicine," only more effectively and safely.

The fiction of the Chinese is far from faultless, but if they had been unable to produce such works, it would have indicated a deficiency of mental power, if not a dangerous gloominess of disposition.

In a land afflicted with many sorrows, these have served to divert men's minds from their toils and anxieties, and to create that variety of interest which contributes so much to the genuine enjoyment of life.

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FABLES AND STORIES.

The earliest specimen of a complete fable in Chinese Literature is given in the "History of the Warring States," and ascribed to Su Tai who lived about 318, B.C. The country was desolated by the strifes of the petty princes, while the power of the state of Tsin on the north-western frontier was rapidly rising. Su Tai advised all the principalities to cease their contentions and to unite in order to be able to withstand their aggressive neighbour. The advice was good; we are not surprised, therefore, to learn that it was rejected and that eventually the quarrelling princes were all snuffed out by the talented and vigorous Prince of Tsin who became the first Emperor of all China.

This is Su Tai's fable:—"A mussel was sunning itself by the river bank when a bittern came by and seized it. The mussel closed its shell and nipped the bird's beak. Hereupon the bittern said: 'If you don't let me go to-day, or to-morrow, there will be a dead mussel.' The shell-fish answered 'If I do not come out of your beak to-day or to-morrow, there will surely be a dead bittern.' Just then a fisherman came along and seized the pair of them!"

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Some of the fables and stories in circulation among the common people are importations from the West. "PROF. JULIEN has translated from the Chinese some forty-five fables derived from Indian sources." Here, however is a genuine Chinese production. It is a very fair satire upon the habit of borrowing trouble, a habit not confined to people in China. "A certain rich man, who had lived to an extreme age, had assembled all his sons and grandsons to do honour to his birthday. Despite their felicitations, however, he wore a troubled face, until at length some one asked him what was amiss. 'Nothing particular,' he replied; 'I was only thinking what trouble I shall have in inviting my guests when my two-hundredth birthday comes round.'"

A CHINESE RIP VAN WINKLE.

There is the story of a man named WANG, who, wandering one day in the mountains, came upon some old men playing a game of chess. After watching them for some time he found that the handle of the axe he carried with him had mouldered away into dust. Seven generations had passed away in the interval. GILES' *Liao Chai*; p. 89.

LU-TSU, one of the most eminent of Chinese alchemists, is said to have earned immortality by rejecting the art of making gold. As the legend goes, shortly after commencing the study of the art, he was met by one of the old genii, who offered to impart to him the great secret of transmutation. "But," asked the young man, "will not the artificial gold relapse to its original elements in the course of time?" "Yes," replied the genius, "but that need not concern you, as it will not happen until after ten thousand ages." "I decline it then," said LU-TSU, "I would rather live in poverty

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than bring a loss to my fellow-men, though it should come only after ten thousand ages." The noble sense of right was more meritorious than any number of sham charities; and the youth who had conscience enough to spurn the gilded bait was at once admitted to the heaven of the genii.

Mr. Giles has translated a story written somewhat in the style of Swift's "Gulliver's Travels." It tells of the imaginary journeys of a certain Tang Ao in A.D. 680, to the "Country of Gentlemen." In this land everyone high and low, rich and poor, were mutually respectful, considerate and courteous—in fact, true gentlemen. In the market-place the buyer said to the trader,—"Really, you *must* oblige me by doubling the price for your excellent goods, so that I may do myself the honour of accepting them." To which the merchant replies, "Indeed, sir, it is not for me to demand a price at all for my goods, and I am ashamed at the high price I ventured to name, and you must not impose upon me by paying more than they are worth," and so on, in a fine satirical vein to the end of the story.

THE FOOL OF THE FAMILY.

A rich Chinese lady had a foolish son, for whom she had taken a wife from a cultured family. When he was about to pay his first visit to his bride's parents, his mother instructed him how to behave and what to say, for she was very anxious that his mental deficiency should not be discovered. She tried to forecast the questions that would be put to him, and to provide him with answers that would satisfy the questioner, and at the same time forestall further questioning. As he carried a costly fan on which a landscape was painted, she thought that guests, disposed to be

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affable, would ask what scene was thereon represented, and so she taught him to respond to that question by saying. "Oh, that is only a fancy sketch." Then as he was to ride a fine mule, she thought the gentlemen would be sure to comment upon its excellent condition, and to inquire its price; so she drilled her son in replying with courteous humility: "The animal is nothing more than a good beast of burden, reared on our farm and not worthy of your attention."

When the young man arrived at the door of his host, the first to greet him was his prospective mother-in-law, who politely inquired after the health of his mother. He promptly responded, saying: "The animal is nothing more than a good beast of burden, reared on our farm, and not worthy of your attention." The horrified mother-in-law drew back, half unconsciously exclaiming: "I was told that yours was a very well-ordered family!" The fool, having bethought himself that he ought to have used the answer which his mother first taught him, hastened: "Oh, that is only a fancy sketch."

CONFUCIUS says 'Rotten wood *cannot* be carved.'

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EPIGRAMMATIC SENTENCES.

A few forceful expressions, curious figures and epigrammatic sentences may serve to show something of the talent of Chinese writers for inventing literary ornaments.

A genius employed in common drudgery is described as "A racehorse in a salt wagon."

A handsome woman was described as "Beautiful enough to overthrow a kingdom," and in Chinese history this very overturning process has occurred more, than once but it is too much to ask us to believe that any lady's charms could "obscure the moon and put flowers to the blush."

Going down the hill of life is sometimes called—"Drawing near the the wood," *i.e.* the "longevity casket," or in plain English the coffin—the last "log-hut" on the road.

A man in tattered garments is said to be—"As ragged as a quail's tail," the tail of a quail being that part of its structure likeliest to be damaged by the attacks of foxes or weasels.

Desperate poverty is forcibly set forth in the words: "So poor and desolate that he possessed nothing but his *shadow*."

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The first use of the phrase the "man who tried to run away from his own shadow," is by CHWANG TSZ, B.C. 300. In the *Occident* men of this type *may* have existed at an earlier date.

Conscience has had many definitions, but is not this very good: "The *Heaven-nature*" "The right and wrong discerning heart?" By an ancient worthy it is recorded that—"He was able to count his life as foreign to himself. This accomplished, he was able to *see* his own *individuality*."

Here is a translation of some mottoes I saw on the pillars of a large theatre in Peking (1884).

1. "By *artificial* representations, the *real* character of men and things is clearly exhibited and made known to all, and thus the unfailing recompense accompanying right and wrong, faithfulness and treachery is infallibly demonstrated.

2. By impersonating the ancients, the times and men of antiquity are vividly brought before us for instruction."

Another pair of mottoes ran thus:

2. "Scenes change as swiftly as the breeze.

2. Forms as gracefully as the shape of the clouds."

As a terse defense of the stage and an advertisement of the skill of the performers, these mottoes show uncommon shrewdness.

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PROVERBS.

If you bow at all, bow low.

A man thinks he knows, but a woman knows better.

If Fortune smiles, who doesn't? If Fortune doesn't, who does?

Great truths cannot penetrate rustic ears.

With money you can move the gods; without it you can't move a man.

Oblige and you will be obliged.

More trees are upright than men.

Some study shows the need for more.

The highest towers begin from the ground.

Medicine cures the man who is *not* fated to die.

No image maker worships the gods, he knows what they are made of.

Free-sitters at the play always grumble most.

If you suspect a man, don't employ him; if you employ him, don't suspect him. (CONFUCIUS).

The faults which a man condemns when out of office he commits when in.

One man makes a road, and another walks on it.

Every man gives a shove to the tumbling wall.

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A stupid son is better than a clever daughter.

Politeness before force.

Gold is tested by fire, man by gold.

Money makes a blind man see.

"Better not be than be nothing."

A day of sorrow is longer than a month of joy.

No distance can separate what Heaven unites, nothing can unite what Heaven separates.

Happy is he who fights with himself.

Wretched is he who contends with others.

No child thinks its own mother ugly.

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NEWSPAPERS.

The oldest newspaper in the world is the *Peking Gazette*, which was instituted by the Emperor HSÜEN TSUNG, A.D. 750.

It is compiled from the Government documents and for more than a thousand years has constituted one of the chief souces of information available to the people. It is usually a bare record of official acts, decrees, promotions, and sentences, without comment or explanation, and I have been assured on good authority that the *most* important doings of the Government are never allowed to appear in it. Probably this was the case formerly, it may be different in our present days of reform and progress. Its circulation is comparatively small, and likely to be so long as no one is allowed to add a word to the dry materials of which it is composed. Couriers take copies to the chief officials of the empire who are supposed to require just a little intelligence concerning the performance of the Central Government.

In the ports of Shanghai, Canton, Tientsin, and in some other cities, there are newspapers of a modern type, but some of them are under foreign management, and

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hence enjoy more freedom than the native press used to possess under a despotic Government. In this again a change has taken place and it is asserted that the papers are practically free. As one of the results of the Japanese war a greater demand for newspapers has sprung up, and if the Government was "strict to mark all that is done amiss" in these pages, it may be doubted whether the Chinese total supply of bamboo rods would be adequate to restrain the editors and writers from vanity. I understand there are about thirty magazines and newspapers published in Shanghai.

There are antiquated imitations of the *Peking Gazette* in the provincial capitals. In Chi-nan-fu, the city where I once resided, the daily *Official Gazette* was a dingy sheet of poor thin paper, about 9 inches in length, by from 4 to 10 inches broad, according to the space required for the news. It cost me the enormous sum of about 25 cents, per month, delivered at my house, and judged by the amount of interesting material it contained it was the most extravagant price I have ever paid for a paper.

I will give an extract from the issue of the 11th moon, 29th day (1889). "Lu Pao-lin, an accepted candidate for office, at present a Prefect's assistant, who was sent by the Inland Revenue Office to urge the Provincial Northern and Southern Salt Tax Department to forward their usual assessment immediately, reports that he has returned and requests three days leave of absence. Granted." In this inspiring strain it would have continued and ended only on this occasion it had to include an extra day's news and so gave the following:—

12th moon 1st day. "This day according to notice, the undermentioned officials went to the temples to worship, namely.—

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To the temple of Confucius, the Governor of the Province.

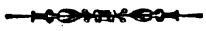
To the temples of the God of War and the God of Literature, the Provincial Treasurer.

To the temple of the Goddess of the mountain TAI, the Intendant of Circuit."

And so on, to the temples of the gods of the Wind, Rain, the Dragon King, down to the divinity who is supposed to be the guardian of the City.

One is not liable to become unduly elated or made frivolous by a journal of this dashing type, but as an expositor of the ordinary round of official life in a great Chinese city, it is eloquent.

And now let us endeavor to note the salient characteristics of Chinese Literature, and its place among the Literature of the World.



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SUMMARY.

The earliest literature of China, then, as we have seen, was probably carried from the West by adventurous emigrants. It consisted merely of a few lists of names and symbols, with notes and items of information; it concerned principally things for which they had some affection, and such things as were most essential to their struggling life.

From this point, presumably about 3000 B.C., down to 1100 B.C., constant additions to this insignificant beginning were made. In the oldest classics are still preserved fragments of undoubted value. They make us acquainted with the customs, laws, and religious observances of the people of that day. Brief notes, also, of important events in the lives of the rulers, of battles, droughts, and floods are mingled with wise counsels, sacrificial odes, prayers, and simple ballads. Profound veneration for an overruling Power, and all inferior deities; reverence for ancestors, rulers, sages, parents and teachers; recognition of conscience as the guide of life; acknowledgement of the obligation of princes to govern justly, to teach and care for the people, and of the people, in their turn, to

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submit cheerfully, and to imitate the virtues of their rulers and instructors; such are the main notes struck in China's earliest books.

Brief and fragmentary as these records are, there is no reason for believing that Chinese Literature suffers by comparison with that of any other country *at the same time*. It is not easy to assign dates to the ancient books of the world; but, so far as our knowledge carries us at present, the Literature of Persia, or India, or Egypt, or Babylon, written more than 3000 years ago, is not superior, *as a whole*, to that of China.

The rest of the classics were written, annotated, and collected into libraries, from 1100 B.C. to 300 B.C. During this 300 years, the Confucian school enlarged the ethical, but added very little to the religious, literature of the country. From 500 B.C. to the commencement of the Christian era, the profoundest minds possessed by China were the Taoists. These men undoubtedly contributed original thought on good government, ideal virtue, immortality, and the origin and philosophy of all things; and strongly resisted the tendency of Confucianism to confine attention solely to ancient literature, education, and the material interests of life.

About 213 B.C., a considerable portion of China's best literature was destroyed by a tyrant. Much was destroyed beyond recovery; but, prompted by their reverence for the teachings of the sages, subsequent rulers, with the assistance of the people, were successful in restoring a large part of it, which has been preserved to the present day.

From that time onwards, the growth of China's literature may be distinctly seen. "The works of the ancients were the foundation of all succeeding literature, yet under different dynasties, special attention has been

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given to particular branches of letters. The period of the HAN dynasties, B.C. 206 to A.D. 190, was marked by historical and philosophical research. Under the T'ANG dynasty, A.D. 600 to 900, there arose many elegant prose and brilliant verse writers. When the SUNG dynasty ruled China, from A.D. 960 to 1126, philosophy again held sway, while dramatic writings distinguished the succeeding Mongol dynasty, A.D. 1206 to 1341. During the MING dynasty, from A.D. 1368 to 1628, arose that desire to compile huge encyclopedias which has so marked the last four centuries. In the period of the Manchu dynasty, from 1628 to the present day, has been displayed a keeness of research and power of independent criticism which will give this period a prominent place in Chinese literature.

It is true that, compared with other Literatures, better known and more widely read, the Chinese has serious defects; but, it is submitted that, while these defects have been unduly exaggerated, its real merits have received but scant acknowledgement. My purpose has been, within the short time at command, to describe rather than to defend; otherwise, a fair case might be stated on the other side. Sometimes I think that our larger acquaintance with these more widely known Literatures of the world incapacitates as for rendering justice to that of China. Then, too, the distinctive qualities of the Chinese as a race, and its isolated position among the nations, form two elements which enter into and somewhat complicate the problem. If the Chinese Literature does not equal the Hebrew in the sublimity of its speculation, the Greek in the originality and beauty of its speculative thought, the Hindoo in the subtlety of its metaphysics the spiritual beauty of its devotional aspirations,—it may well be asked in reply, what Literature does? But even when

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all that is here implied is freely admitted, I must emphatically insist that the difference is not so great as it is generally believed to be. China's sages and worthies have had the "passion for righteousness," the enthusiasm for humanity, the love of the beautiful and some conception, at least, of the sublime. Her thinkers have delved deep; her devout sons have adored the Supreme; her poets have uttered the finest feeling of the human heart. So much is certain and when we think of "patient toil, love of research, and passionate ardour for literary pursuits, it is interesting to give rein to one's fancies,—to wonder, in short, what would have been the result had the Chinese possessed all the advantages we have been blessed with in the West, instead of presenting the unique spectacle of a nation self-contained and self-sufficient."

It should not be forgotten that China's solid contributions to the World's Literature have been made in spite of immense disadvantages. No nation has on the whole a purer Literature, or with the exception of the Jews, one containing so much sound sense and practical moral teaching.

One writer says: "Untold treasures lie hidden in the rich lodes of Chinese Literature," and Prof. LEGGE has recently said: "The field of Chinese Literature is vast and attractive. Thus far the surface of it has been little more than scratched, and that only in a few places."

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CHINESE LITERATURE.

A recent writer says: "A single flower involves the existence of the universe; earth and sky are met and married in its bloom and fragrance; a single poet involves race, history, climate, art, humanity."

If this is true of a single poet, how much more is it true of an entire Literature! 'Race, history, climate, art humanity.' By these things a Literature is determined as to both its quality and its form; without these, it cannot exist. And, in the consideration of a Literature, it is only as we keep these things before the mind—the race of which the Literature is the expression, as modified by its history, its local conditions, its artistic impulse, its larger relations to humanity—that we shall be saved from imposing artificial standards, from making extravagant claims, from blinding our eyes to the excellences which do exist while vainly demanding those which do not.

The modern conception of a vital growth rather than a mechanical construction, while immeasurably enriching our idea of Literature, materially enlarges its scope. As a thing of life, it includes to-day, not generously but legitimately, many works which a century ago, as a thing

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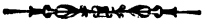
of technical form, it would have shut out; and among these, the literary productions of the Chinese. But so long as the raw material of the growing complex life and experience of a people. the common property of the many, taken up and clarified by thought and imagination, and expressed through the medium of language in more or less artistic forms by the gifted few, constitutes in a general way that which we designate as Literature; so long will remain valid the claim of China to possess a Literature of her own, which, however different from others, is nevertheless vast and varied and deserving of study. When it is better known it will be more highly esteemed. When China's best authors have been presented to Western readers in as attractive translations as those of Greece and Palestine, we shall accord them a far higher place than we do now, and readily acknowledge that China has a Literature fine in quality as well as great in extent.



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Notes and Errata.

Page 5, line 16, Instead of "If I had fifty years more," read "If I had five or ten more years, &c." This is considered by some good scholars to be the proper translation, as Confucius at 73 would be more likely to speculate on five or ten years more of life than to use extremely exaggerated language.

Page 6, line 13, after "remove" insert "one" of &c.

„ 6 „ 15, after "capacity" insert "and."

„ 6, 2nd line from the bottom should be "is disputed by many good scholars."

„ 13, line 10, should be "from B.C. 722 to 484."

„ 18 „ 8, from bottom, should be 1407 and not 1,407.

„ 22 See "Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio," by Prof. H. A. Giles; Vol. 1 Intro. p. xviii.

„ 24, line 6, should be "thirty-one notes"—not "thirty-two."

„ 28 „ 9, "sweet."

„ 29 „ 2, "limpid."

„ 42 „ 10, "over"—instead of "about."

„ 46 „ 14, from the bottom, after "at" insert "my."

„ 47 „ 9, from top, for "feeling" read "feelings."

„ 47 „ 10, from top, after "of" insert "their."

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